

ARTICLE APPEARS  
ON PAGE 7A

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER  
28 JANUARY 1981

# Colombia guerrillas say employer of hostage from Pa. is a CIA front

Reuters

BOGOTA, Colombia — Leftist guerrillas who kidnapped a Lancaster County, Pa., missionary linguist last week said yesterday that the language institute he works for was a front for the CIA.

The guerrillas, who go by the name M-19, also claimed in an extensive document delivered to foreign correspondents that the United States operated a secret missile base in a vast wildlife park in the interior of Colombia.

They demanded that both operations be closed down in exchange for the freedom of linguist Chester Allen Bitterman 3d, whom they have threatened to kill.

The guerrillas said the missile base was in the Macarena Wildlife Park,

about 180 miles south of Bogota. There has been no U.S. comment regarding that assertion or the accusation that the CIA ran the U.S.-based Summer Language Institute, which employs Bitterman.

("It's definitely a Christian organization," Bitterman's father said yesterday in Lancaster in denying any CIA connection with the institute. He said the institute's primary purpose is to translate the Bible into the tribal languages of Colombian natives.)

Bitterman, 28, was kidnapped Jan. 19 in Bogota by armed and hooded guerrillas. His wife and two young daughters have been reported safe at the U.S. Embassy.

M-19, one of the most active of Colombia's guerrilla groups, last week gave the institute until Feb. 19 to

close its operations in the country if Bitterman's life were to be spared.

Yesterday, in a new condition for releasing him, it demanded that the document alleging CIA involvement and the existence of the missile base be published in various U.S. and European newspapers.

The Colombian government, the U.S. Embassy and the institute have said they would not negotiate with the guerrillas. Institute officials have warned that Bitterman needs a special diet for a gall bladder condition.

Embassy attache Al Laun said that an extremist faction of M-19 may have seized Bitterman, and that "they are likely to be more extreme in their actions." No word from Bitterman has been relayed by his captors.